

Remarks in Melbourne, Florida  
October 23, 2004

*The President.* Thanks for coming today.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Thank you all. Thanks for coming today. We're getting close to voting time—actually, you already are voting here. We're traveling your State not only asking for the vote, I'm here to ask for your help. I'm asking you to get your friends and neighbors and remind them they have a duty to vote in a democracy. And as you're getting people to do their duty, don't overlook discerning Democrats, people like Senator Zell Miller from Georgia. Remind people that if they want a safer America, a stronger America, and a better America, put me and Dick Cheney back in office.

I really enjoy campaigning. I like to be out with the people. I like to tell people why I'm running and what I intend to do as your President for 4 more years. Perhaps the most important reason of all for you to put me back into office is so that Laura will be the First Lady for 4 more years.

*Audience members.* Laura! Laura! Laura!

*The President.* Listen, some of you all may appreciate this—I think some of you will appreciate this. When I asked Laura to marry me—well, we'd been to the seventh grade together at San Jacinto Junior High in Midland, Texas. We became reacquainted later on. She was a public school librarian at the time. And when I asked her to marry me, she said, "Fine, but make me a promise." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Promise me that I'll never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that promise. [Laughter] She is giving a lot of speeches, and when she does, the American people see a compassionate, warm, strong First Lady.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I fully admit it, he doesn't have the most hair in the race. [Laughter] I didn't

pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. He's getting the job done for the American people.

And I'm proud of brother Jeb. The thing I like about him is you know where he stands. He's not one of these people that takes a poll or a focus group to kind of find his way. And not only that, when times were tough here in the State of Florida, I saw firsthand his steady leadership. Though I came and tried to remind the people of this State the Federal Government would do everything we can to help the people, the truth of the matter is, Florida's great strength is not only your Governor but the fact that neighbor loved neighbor, neighbor helped neighbor. Florida showed great character during these times of testing.

I'm honored to call Buzz Aldrin friend. I appreciate him being here today. He's one of the great pioneers of America. I appreciate you, Buzz, coming. I want to thank you for the example you have set for future pioneers.

I want to thank Congressman Dave Weldon for his service to the great State of Florida. I appreciate you being here, Dave. When you go to the polls, make sure you vote for Mel Martinez. He'll make a great United States Senator. I want to thank all the State and local officials who are here. I want to thank my friends in Little Texas for having played for you all today.

Most of all, I want to thank the grassroots activists who are putting up the signs and making the phone calls, who have worked so hard to make this rally such a fantastic rally. I want to thank you for what you have done and what you're going to do, and that is turn out the vote. And with your help, we'll carry Florida again

and win a great victory on November the 2d.

We have just 10 days to go in this election, and voters have a clear choice between two very different candidates and dramatically different approaches and records. You know where I stand, and sometimes, you even know where my opponent stands. *[Laughter]* We both have records. I am proudly running on my record. And the Senator is running from his, and there is a reason why. There is a mainstream in American politics, and my opponent sits on the far left bank. I'm a compassionate conservative and proudly so. At a time when our country has much to accomplish and much more to do, I offer a record of reform and results.

This election comes down to five clear choices for America's families, five choices on issues of great consequence: your family's security; your family's budget; your quality of life; your retirement; and the bedrock values that are so critical to our families and to our future.

The first clear choice is the most important because it concerns the security of your family. All our progress on every other issue depends on the safety of our citizens. This will be the first Presidential election since September the 11th, 2001. Americans will go to the polls in a time of war and ongoing threats unlike any we have faced before. Terrorists who killed thousands are still dangerous. They are determined to strike us again. The outcome of this election will set the direction of the war against terror. The most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Since that terrible morning of September the 11th, 2001, we have fought the terrorists across the Earth, not for pride, not for power, but because the

lives of our citizens are at stake. Our strategy is clear. We've strengthened protections for our homeland. We're reforming and strengthening our intelligence services. We're transforming our military. We will not have a draft. We will have an all-volunteer army. We're staying on the offensive. We are resolute, and we are determined to protect the people.

And we're succeeding. More than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice, and the rest of them know we're on their trail.

My opponent has a very different approach. He says that September the 11th, quote, "didn't change me much at all"—

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* —end quote. And that's pretty clear. He considers the war on terror primarily a law enforcement and intelligence gathering operation.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* His top policy adviser has questioned whether it is even a war at all, saying that, "It's just a metaphor, like the war on poverty."

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Anyone who thinks we're fighting a metaphor does not understand the enemy we face. You cannot win a war if you are not convinced we are even in one.

Senator Kerry also misunderstands our battle against insurgents and terrorists in Iraq. After voting to authorize force against Saddam Hussein, after calling it the right decision when I sent troops into Iraq, the Senator now calls it the "wrong war."

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* The Senator used to recognize that Saddam Hussein was a gathering threat who hated America. After all, the Senator said so. He used to recognize that Saddam was a state sponsor of terror with a history of pursuing and even using weapons of mass destruction. After all, the Senator said so. He used to understand that Saddam was a major source of instability in the Middle East. After all, the Senator

said so. And when he voted to authorize force, the Senator must have recognized the nightmare scenario that terrorists might somehow access weapons of mass destruction. Senator Kerry seems to have forgotten all that as his position has evolved over the course of this campaign. You might call it election amnesia.

I knew it then, and I know it now, that America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Senator Kerry now calls Iraq a “diversion.” But the case of just one terrorist shows how wrong his thinking is. A man named Zarqawi is responsible for planting car bombs and beheading Americans in Iraq. He ran a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan—until we arrived. And then he fled to Baghdad, where he plotted and planned and where he’s fighting us today. He publicly announced his allegiance to Usama bin Laden. See, if Zarqawi and his associates were not busy fighting American and Iraqi forces in Iraq, what does my opponent think they’d be doing? Peaceful small-business men? [Laughter] Working for benevolent societies? Our troops will defeat the likes of Zarqawi so we do not have to face him in our own cities.

The choice in this election could not be clearer. You cannot lead our Nation to the decisive victory on which the security of every American family depends if you do not see the true dangers of the post-September the 11th era. My opponent has a September 10th point of view. At his convention, he declared his strategy would be to respond to attacks after America is hit. And that would be too late. America—in our debates, he said we can defend America only if we pass a “global test.”

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I’m not making that up. He was standing about this far from me when he said it. Listen, I’ll work with our friends and allies. We’ll build strong coalitions. But I will never turn over America’s national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I want to thank those who wear the uniform who are here today. Thank you for your service. I want to thank the veterans who are here for having set such a great example for those who wear the uniform. I want to thank the military families who are here.

And I assure you, we will continue to support our troops in harm’s way. That is why I went to the United States Congress and proposed \$87 billion in supplemental funding, to make sure our troops had that which they need to complete their missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We received great bipartisan support for that funding. As you gather the vote, I want you to remind your friends and neighbors of this startling statistic: Only 4 Members of the United States Senate—4 out of 100—voted to authorize the use of force and then voted against providing the funding necessary to supporting our troops in harm’s way, and 2 of those 4 were my opponent and his runningmate.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* So they asked him, “Why did you make the vote?” And you might remember the most famous quote of the 2004 campaign, “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it.” They kept pressing him, and he finally said, “The whole thing was a complicated matter.” There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

We will continue to protect America by spreading freedom and liberty. I believe in the transformational power of liberty. Free nations do not breed resentment and export terror. Free nations become allies against these ideologues of hate.

Think about what’s happened in Afghanistan. Because we acted to defend ourselves, that society has gone from darkness to light. Three-and-a-half years ago, young girls couldn’t go to school. Their mothers were taken to the public square and whipped if they did not toe the line of the barbarians who ran that country. Because we

acted, millions voted in a Presidential election. The first voter in the Afghan Presidential election was a 19-year-old woman. Freedom is on the march.

*Audience members.* Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

*The President.* Iraq has a strong Prime Minister. They'll be holding Presidential elections in January. Think how far that society has come from the days of torture chambers and mass graves. I believe people in the Middle East want to be free. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

The second clear choice in this election concerns your family budget, your wallet. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I pledged to lower taxes for American families. I kept my word. We doubled the child credit to \$1,000 to help our moms and dads. We reduced the marriage penalty. We believe the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not penalize marriage. We dropped the lowest tax bracket to 10 percent to help our working families. We reduced taxes on everybody who paid taxes. As a result of these good policies, real after-tax income—that's the money you have left in your pocket—is about—is up about 10 percent since I've been your President.

When you're out gathering up the vote, remind the people what we have been through in this country. Six months prior to my arrival, the stock market was in serious decline—6 months before getting there. That foretold a recession. Then we had some corporate scandals. Then those attacks on our country cost us about a million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th.

But our economic policies are working. This economy is growing. We're growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.9 million\* new jobs since August of 2003. The unemployment rate

is 5.4 percent. That's lower than the average rate of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. Farm income is up. The homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. And your unemployment rate in the great State of Florida is 4.5 percent.

My opponent has very different plans for your family's budget. He intends to take a bigger chunk out of it.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He voted against the higher child tax credit. He voted against the marriage penalty relief. He voted against lower taxes. If he had had his way, an average middle-class family would be paying 2,000 more dollars a year to the Federal Government.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* It's part of a pattern. See, he's voted 10 times to raise taxes on gasoline. All told, during his 20 years as a United States Senator, my opponent has voted 98 times to raise taxes.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* That's about five times a year. When a Senator does something that often, he must really enjoy it. [Laughter] During this campaign, he's also made a lot of big, expensive promises. He's promised about \$2.2 trillion of new Federal spending. That's with a "T"—trillion with a "T." That's a lot even for a Senator from Massachusetts. [Laughter]

So they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Well, oh, don't worry. We'll just tax the rich." You've heard that before, haven't you? See, there's a gap. When he says "tax the rich," he can raise about 600 to 800 billion dollars. So there's a gap between what he has promised and what he can raise, and guess who usually gets to fill that gap?

*Audience members.* We do!

*The President.* We're not going to let him tax you; we're going to carry Florida and win a great victory in November.

The third choice in this election involves the quality of life for our families. A good

---

\* White House correction.

education and quality health care are important to successful life. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to end the soft bigotry of low expectations by reforming our public schools. I kept my word. We passed education reforms to bring high standards to our classrooms and to make schools accountable to our parents. We're seeing progress. Math and reading scores are rising. We're closing an achievement gap amongst minority students. We'll build on these reforms and extend them to our high schools so that no child is left behind in America.

We'll continue to improve our lives—lives for our families, by making health care more affordable and accessible. We'll expand health savings accounts so small businesses can cover their workers and more families are able to get health care accounts they own and manage themselves. We'll create association health plans so small businesses can join together and buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do. We will help families in need by expanding community health centers. We'll make sure every eligible child is enrolled in our Government's low-income health insurance program to make sure health care is available and affordable to you.

We will do something about these junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of medicine and driving good doctors out of practice. I've met too many ob-gyns who are being driven out of practice because of these lawsuits. And I've met too many women who are worried about whether they're going to get the quality health care they need to bring their baby into life. We have a national problem with health care and these lawsuits. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-personal-injury-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent has made his choice, and he put a personal-injury trial lawyer on the ticket.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I have made my choice. I'm standing with the doctors and patients. I am for medical liability reform—now.

Senator Kerry has a different point of view on our schools. He voted for the No Child Left Behind Act but now wants to weaken the accountability standards. He's proposed including measures like teacher attendance to judge whether students can read and write and add and subtract. He voted against health savings accounts. He opposes association health plans. He voted 10 times against medical liability reform. He can run from his record, but he cannot hide.

Now he's proposing a big-Government health care plan that would cause 8 million families to lose the private coverage they get at work, put them on the health—the Government plan. Eighty percent of the people who would get coverage under his proposal would be enrolled in a Government program.

In one of our debates, he tried to tell Americans, when it comes to his health care plan, and I'd like to quote him, "Government has nothing to do with it." I could barely contain myself. My opponent's plan would move America down the road to Federal control of health care, and that is the wrong road for America's families. He can run—he can run in camo, but he cannot hide.

In all we do to improve health care, we will make sure the decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by officials in Washington, DC.

The fourth clear choice in this election involves your retirement. Our Nation has made a solemn commitment to America's seniors on Social Security and Medicare. When I ran for President 4 years ago, I promised to keep that commitment and improve Medicare by adding prescription drug coverage. I kept my word. Leaders in both political parties have talked about strengthening Medicare for years. We got the job done. Seniors are now getting discounts on medicine with drug discount cards. Our

low-income seniors are getting \$600 this year and another \$600 next year to help pay for their prescriptions. And beginning in 2006, all seniors will be able to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

My opponent voted against the Medicare bill that included prescription drug coverage, even though it was supported by AARP and other seniors groups. Campaigning, he said, "If I am the President, I am going to repeal that phony bill." Then a little later on, he said, "No, I don't want to repeal it." That sounds familiar.

As your President for the next 4 years, I will defend the reforms we worked so hard to pass, and we will keep the promise of Medicare for America's seniors. And we will keep the promise of Social Security for our seniors. And we will strengthen Social Security for a younger generation.

Every election, desperate politicians try to scare seniors about Social Security. You might remember the campaign in 2000. They were saying, "If George W. gets elected, our seniors will not get their checks." Remind your friends and neighbors that George W. got elected and our seniors got their checks. You will continue to get your checks. Baby boomers like me are in good shape when it comes to the Social Security trust.

But we need to worry about our children and our grandchildren. We need to make sure Social Security will be there when they need it. And that is why I believe younger workers ought to be able to take some of their own money and put it in a personal savings account, a personal savings account they call their own, that the Government cannot take away.

My opponent takes a different approach about Social Security. He talks about protecting Social Security. But he's the only candidate in this race who voted eight times for higher taxes on Social Security benefits. That's his record. He can run from it, but he cannot hide.

And when it comes to the next generation, he's offered nothing. American fami-

lies have a clear choice. My opponent wants to scare the seniors of today and do nothing to secure the system for the seniors of tomorrow. I will keep the promise of Social Security and Medicare and strengthen these great systems for our children and our grandchildren.

The fifth clear choice in this election is on the values that are so crucial to keeping our families strong. And here, my opponent and I are miles apart. I believe marriage is a sacred commitment, a pillar of our civilization, and I will defend it. This isn't a partisan issue. You know, when Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman, the vast majority of Democrats supported it and my predecessor, Bill Clinton, signed the bill into law. Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the Defense of Marriage Act.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I believe that reasonable people can find common ground on difficult issues. Republicans and Democrats and many citizens on both sides of the life issue came together and agreed we should ban the brutal practice of partial-birth abortions. I proudly signed that bill. But Senator Kerry was part of an out-of-the-mainstream minority that voted against the ban.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He voted against parental notification laws.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* He voted against the Unborn Victims of Violence Act.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* I'll continue to reach out to Americans of every belief and move this goodhearted Nation toward a culture of life.

In the course of this campaign, my opponent has said that the heart and soul of America can be found in Hollywood.

*Audience members.* Boo-o-o!

*The President.* Most American families don't look to Hollywood as the source for

values. The heart and soul of America is found in communities like Melbourne, Florida.

All of these choices make this one of the most important elections in our history. The security and prosperity of our country, the health and education of our families, the retirement of our seniors, and the direction of our culture are all at stake. The decision is in the best hands, because the decision belongs to the American people.

I see a great day for America. One of my favorite quotes was written by a Texan named Tom Lea. He said, "Sarah and I live on the east side of the mountain. It's the sunrise side, not the sunset side. It's the side that sees the day that is coming, not to see the day that is gone." You know, my opponent has spent much of this campaign talking about the day that is gone. I see the day that is coming.

We've been through a lot together over the last 3¾ years. Because we've done the hard work of climbing the mountain, we see the valley below. We'll protect our families and build on their prosperity. We'll

defend the deepest values of our country. We will spread freedom and the peace we all want. We'll do everything I can to make America safer.

Four years ago when I traveled this great State, I made this pledge, that if I was honored with the office, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of that office. With your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

Thanks for coming. God bless. On to victory. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. at the Space Coast Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Zell Miller of Georgia, who made the keynote address at the 2004 Republican National Convention; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Apollo 11 astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin; Mel R. Martinez, senatorial candidate in Florida; entertainers Little Texas; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government.

## Remarks in Jacksonville, Florida *October 23, 2004*

*The President.* Thank you all. Thank you so much for coming today. Brother Jeb said, "Why don't we go to Jacksonville; maybe a couple of folks will show up to say hello." Laura and I thank you so very much for coming out on a Saturday afternoon. I'm here to ask for your vote, and I'm here to ask for your help. People are voting here in Florida. You need to get your friends and neighbors to go to the polls. And by the way, when you're getting people to go to the polls, don't overlook discerning Democrats, people like Senator Zell Miller from Georgia. With your help, we'll carry Florida again and win a great victory in November.

So when I asked Laura to marry me, she said, "Fine, just so long as you—I never have to give a political speech." I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to the promise. Laura is giving a lot of speeches, and when people see her speak, they see a warm, compassionate, great First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back into office. Perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm proud of my runningmate, Dick Cheney. I admit it, he doesn't have the waviest hair in the race. [*Laughter*] I didn't pick him because of his hairdo. I picked him